



GOLDEN TIPS FOR GROWING YOUR NETWORK



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You and your new connection need time to get to know each other before jumping into a commitment together. Take time to build your relationship before asking for a lead or working together.

One of the key things that you must understand when approaching networking is that everyone has the potential to be an expert networker, it doesn't have to be difficult, yet, 95% of those who attempt to network will fail.

Why? - Because they didn't have the necessary knowledge and tools to succeed in today's competitive marketplace.

LEARN TO FAIL SO IT WON'T BE YOU

First off, let's have a look at why people fail at networking, once you understand the basics you'll be less likely to head down that path yourself.

So, in no particular order, the top five things that keep people from succeeding in networking are:

1. Not taking action

This characterises the people who attend one networking event and say that "it didn't work" because they got no referrals.

2. Restlessness

This one is a classic, a person attends a networking event, talks about their product, doesn't bother to build rapport with any of the other attendees and drops out when they receive "zero" referrals, saying that networking "doesn't work."

3. Life

This is particularly true when people work from home. A person inadvertently becomes occupied with their work, children or housework and doesn't allocate or commit time to growing their business through networking.

4. Terrible Planning

You know that saying, "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail"? Well, many people begin their business on a whim. They come up with an idea on a Monday and by Friday they've found a free internet site, downloaded a free template and attended a few networking events to try and sell their products and services. These are the types of people who claim that networking "doesn't work," if they're not inundated with referrals right away.

5. A Damaging Attitude

Having the correct outlook won't guarantee your success but having the wrong or unrealistic outlook will most certainly ensure failure. Consequently, having the correct attitude to networking is the foundation to building a successful business.

"How we manage our negative attitudes can make the difference, damage done, or opportunities missed. No one can go back and start a beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending."
(Maria Robinson).

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BECOMING A BETTER NETWORKER REQUIRES YOU TO EXPERIENCE NEW THINGS

Networking can feel daunting at first, and that's normal! You may even have some reservations about trying something new, but don't let that deter you! Once you've attended a few meetings you'll find that it does get easier and that you're able to relax and be excited at the prospect of meeting like minded individuals to connect with.

Here are some tips for attending networking events:

- If you see somebody else who also looks uncomfortable and is standing alone, approach them, you'll be doing a good deed that will benefit both of you.
- Try walking up to somebody who looks different to you, acquaint yourselves and start asking questions, try to find a topic that interests you both. It won't take long to find something mutually in common, maybe you'll share the same love for a hobby, or you both support the same team.
- Approach someone who you've been wanting to meet. Maybe you've heard of this person through a friend or you've been following them on social media for some time.
- Be friendly and self-assured.

Soon you'll be on your way to becoming a networking maven!

Remember that in order to succeed in networking you will have to occasionally stretch yourself to the edge of your comfort zone – and that's a good thing! (Also, this gets much easier with practise!)

Whether you're attending a formal meeting or event, or a smaller gathering, being ready and open to networking is very important, even if you do feel unsure, introverted, nervous, blasé, or tired. Like the Scout's motto says, always 'be prepared', you never know who you're going to run into.

So, how can you be sure that you're prepared?

Have some snappy information about yourself ready to go, keep it short, centred and clear.

Don't be afraid to give your introduction some personality and flare!

For example, something that meets all the above requirements may sound like:

"Hi, my name is Linda Jones. I spend my time producing and running interactive booklets on networking." - This covers what you do and not just your name and job title.

Another example might be:

"Hi, my name is Tracey Franco. I produce Digital marketing adverts from script to screen and everything in between."

Most importantly, be genuine and honest with your introduction, make eye contact and smile, show people that you are confident, at ease and friendly.

Always make sure to follow up your introduction with a good business card. Effective networking is seldom accomplished by just forking over a business card, but it's always good to give people something to go away with.

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KEYS TO EFFECTIVE NETWORKING

Once you have made a new connection that you feel is valuable, give each other some time to get to know one another before jumping into any sort of business commitments together.

Get real and personal

No one wants to hear an automatic “elevator pitch”, people want to know who you are. Read the room and understand who you are talking to and what they need.

Think about their needs over your own goals

To develop a solid relationship with someone, you need to be thinking about them, because once you understand them, you’ll be able to understand where they’re coming from, what’s important to them and what you can offer them.

Focus on people who are relevant to you and don’t expect anything in return

You don’t need to know the most people, you just need to know the right people. It’s better to have five people know you well, than 500 people who may not even remember your name.

Don’t leave anything to chance

Define what you are looking for and create a list, so you have a focus when networking, but don’t dismiss anyone as irrelevant. You never know how a person can unexpectedly expand your network. If someone isn’t your match, then introduce them to others who might be. This will only enhance your network.

Set expectations

There is no need to communicate with everyone, especially those who don’t know, like or trust you. Focus on finding the right people who are relevant to you and your business.

Grow your network outside of your industry

This will make you more valuable to those in your immediate network as you’ll be able to connect people from lots of different industries. Go beyond your normal routine, create opportunities instead of excuses.

Do your homework

Get clear about what you’re looking for, ask yourself, “what do I need to do to grow my business? Who do I need to meet?”



Golden Tips for Growing Your Network



Reach out to someone new

this part of networking is what requires the most time and commitment. You know what they say, "time is our most valuable resource," so, out of respect for yourself and others, always ask questions that show you respect their time, for example, "do you have two minutes to chat now?" If they don't, that's okay, ask to reschedule for another time. This opens an opportunity to speak with them later when they are available.

If you are reaching out to someone face-to-face, start off by offering a compliment, keep the first connection short. Start by offering praise and don't request anything right away. It's always best to avoid asking for a favour when you first meet someone, instead ask to meet for a coffee. After that initial contact you'll be able to move forward to a lengthier, more in-depth meeting

If your first contact is via email, keep it short, friendly and to the point. Split your message into short segments and focus on a small amount of praise or recognition of their business. You can send further details and a longer explanation about your business when they respond.

Remember to ask for permission to continue, especially if you are asking someone for a favour. Sometimes you will not have the luxury of time to get to know a person before making a request, so make it polite and explain the urgency of your request. A benefit of this approach is that you are getting your connection to say "yes" to you. When someone says yes to you three times, then the odds of your offer being accepted is drastically increased.

Build rapport

The first step in building rapport is finding common ground. This will not only give you something to talk about, but it will also make you more interesting. Finding common ground is easy, most people generally enjoy talking about themselves so try to ask open-ended questions until you find something in common. Show you're paying attention and are interested in what they have to say by asking follow-up questions.

Show your connection that you are a good listener, you can do this by maintaining eye contact and occasionally nodding. Look away now and then to show you are mentally processing the information, this will also help you avoid making the other person uncomfortable, no one likes being stared down.

Be conscious of your facial expressions and how you come across from the other person's point of view. If you yawn or look around the room, you will appear to be bored with the conversation.

Mirroring a person's speech pattern and body language is one of the most effective ways to build rapport. You can imitate a person by making the same gestures and talking at the same speed as they do.

Believe it or not, the people around you are also nervous. If you are warm and friendly, people will be drawn to you and feel good about themselves.

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Create a Networking Schedule

Set yourself a written daily schedule to connect with one person a day. When you reach out to five people per week that's 250 connections in one year.

It doesn't have to be anything fancy or time consuming, try a phone call, short email, text message or Facebook message, you'll be growing your confidence and your network.

Follow up with your connections

A few days after meeting with someone, follow up with a brief email or text. Bring up a topic you discussed or make a comment on an interesting topic to develop your relationship. Leading with a relevant conversation helps to anchor the past conversation in their mind and shows your personality. It also shows that you reaching out to them is not just a blanket message.

If you feel that you didn't get the results you wanted, try reaching out in a different way. If you find that you are not getting a response, change your approach. Whilst you don't want to annoy anyone, there is nothing wrong with being persistent.



Important Points to Remember

"My Golden Rule of Networking is simple: Don't keep score." (Harvey Mackay)

Focus on building yourself up, be someone who can be trusted and liked by others, that's what will help people get to know you and in time be ready to do business with you.

- Build trust by engaging and being honest. Trust takes time to build, but insincerity takes longer to overcome.
- Develop a relationship. You always need to create a bond before moving on to negotiations, favours and asking for help.
- Listen to the people you connect with. Take time to actively listen to people's stories and provide value.
- Look for new opportunities to network. Volunteer for events, committees or projects where you are likely to meet interesting people you may want to connect with. Working on a project or task is one of the best ways to develop relationships and to get to know their influential board members.
- Lastly, give, give, give! Networking isn't all about you. Switch your thinking and be there for the people you are networking with. Think about the contacts you want, need and value, and then give that to the people you meet!

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WHO TO APPROACH

- Family
- Friends
- Existing clients
- Previous work colleagues
- Friends of family
- Real estate agents
- Land agents
- Display agents
- Off the plan agents
- Accountants
- Architects
- Schools
- Sporting clubs
- Restaurants
- Companies (door to door)
- University's
- Church groups and clubs
- LinkedIn
- In house deals
- Networking groups (local and government)
- Community news
- Letter drops

THINGS YOU CAN DO THAT OTHER BUSINESSES DON'T

- Weekly newsletters to agents
- Gift on first referral that is delivered to their office
- Purchase packs to give out
- Marketing bags
- Interesting pamphlets
- Refer a friend incentive
- Keep in touch with your existing client base
- Offer \$100 to refer you to another person in the same office
- Give gifts as most people feel like they must replicate
- Keep in weekly contact with your connections
- Make yourself available to answer any question
- Referral fees
- Christmas gifts
- Birthday gifts

